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# Family of 'Subversives' Pays a High Price

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John Rudder knew 30-odd years ago that he was being watched. The FBI men in three-piece suits and fedoras would go right up to his employers, right up to his neighbors — right up to John Rudder — and ask questions.

"What are you doing now, John?" the men would ask, as they climbed from Washington street corners into the cab he drove during a time when the headlines were of President Eisenhower, the Korean War and the Rosenberg spy trials. "Are you ready to talk?"

He never was — at least not to the neatly dressed FBI men.

Three decades later, Rudder, 56, finally learned the extent of the FBI investigation into his life during the 1950s and '60s. His daughter Miriam, 25, was denied a security clearance in 1977 as a research aide with a congressional committee investigating the assassinations of the Kennedys and Martin Luther King Jr. Miriam's record was not the problem. Her father's was.

The FBI had compiled eight volumes on John Rudder by 1967, when surveillance ended, and had labeled him a Communist years before. In its 1977 security report on Miriam, the FBI mentioned that she had attended a "subversive" secular Jewish school at age 10. The CIA, which also reviewed Miriam's security status for the committee, recommended that she be denied clearance not because of anything she had done, but because of her parents' long history of protest activity. Miriam was bound to have close bonds of affection to them, the CIA reported.

Rep. Louis Stokes (D-Ohio), the committee chairman and himself a former street-marching civil rights activist, had the power to veto the CIA recommendation, but he did not.

"There was nothing else I could do," Stokes says. "It's not my job to get her clearance. I did about all I could do."

So, long after popular opinion has come to share John Rudder's disgust for racial discrimination, the Vietnam War and any number of other causes he has championed, the discredited FBI tactics used against him have kept his daughter from getting a job. [Since then, she has bounced from temporary job to temporary job, and been periodically unemployed, as she is today.]

"I am not a Communist," says John Rudder today. "I've never been a member of the Communist Party."

Nonetheless, those FBI files, Rudder believes, kept him — and now his daughter — from getting and keeping a good job and from becoming the civil rights lawyer he had once hoped to be.

Rudder and his wife, Doris, who marched with him on picket lines, were never leaders of any movement. They were not the Lillian Hellmans and Arthur Millers who eventually came to be respected for their principled stands. The Rudders were anonymous foot soldiers whom the FBI says today would not even be watched.

Following in the spirit of her parents, Miriam is now suing the FBI. And more than 40 million people recently watched CBS' "60 Minutes" tell her story. That report — except for occasional newspaper photos of John or Doris toting protest signs on the street — was the first publicity the family has ever received.

The Rudders have been a fixture in the small world of Washington protest for three decades. Protest has organized their lives and taught values to their children. Protest also has given meaning to John Rudder's life — much of which has been spent working at odd jobs and living in public housing.

John and Doris Rudder inherited protest from their labor activist fathers and — much as doctors and lawyers routinely raise children who become doctors and lawyers — have raised children in their independent mold. But there has been a price.

John Rudder is a black Quaker. His wife, Doris, is white and Jewish. In the 1950s that in itself was protest.

The son of a Baptist deacon and railroad laborer from Paducah, Ky., Rudder started adulthood with great promise. He was graduated from Purdue University and in 1949 became one of the first black officers in the Marine Corps.

President Truman had integrated the armed forces the year before, but at his first assignment in Quantico, Va., Rudder was reminded that he was still black. A white enlisted Marine tried to stop him from sitting with white officers at the base theater, when he went to the base pool, white-sheeted Ku Klux Klansmen were

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